



MONTGOMERY COUNTY GOVERNMENT

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
COORDINATING COUNCIL**

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

MISSION:

To reduce the incidence of domestic violence and create a safe community for families to live free of abuse.

September 15, 2019

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FOR THE HONORABLE **PATRICIA MITCHELL**
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FOR THE HONORABLE **ROBERT A. GREENBERG**
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THE HONORABLE **REBECCA SMONDROWSKI**
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STUDENT MEMBER

ESHIGO OKASILI, ESQ.
COMMUNITY MEMBER

RONALD WHALEN
COMMUNITY MEMBER

CHERYL KRAVITZ
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MINDY THIEL
COMMUNITY MEMBER

APPOINTMENT PENDING
COMMUNITY MEMBER

APPOINTMENT PENDING
NON-GOVERNMENTAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE OR
ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION

APPOINTMENT PENDING
NON-GOVERNMENTAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE OR
ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION

STAFF

SMITA VARIA
PROGRAM MANAGER
MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

COUNCIL INFORMATION

TERM OF SERVICE

There are nineteen voting members of the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) who serve without compensation and are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Five are Ex-Officio members who serve at the request of the County Council: the Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court; the Administrative Judge of the District Court; the Sheriff; the State's Attorney; and the Regional Administrator for the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. There are six Ex-Officio members who are appointed by the County Executive: a member of the County Council selected by the Council President; the Directors of the Montgomery County Departments of Correction and Rehabilitation; Health and Human Services; and Police; the Executive Director of the Montgomery County Commission for Women; and the President of the Board of Education for Montgomery County Public Schools. In addition, there are five members of the general public appointed by the County Executive for renewable three-year terms, at least one of whom must be an attorney representing domestic violence victims, and at least one of whom must be a survivor of domestic violence. In 2010, the DVCC's code pertaining to membership was amended to add a student member. The student member is a high school student who is appointed to serve a one-year term that can be renewed for one additional year. This year, the DVCC's code pertaining to membership was amended to add two representatives from non-governmental domestic violence service or advocacy organizations serving County residents.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

The DVCC meets bi-monthly on the second Thursday of the month and has met seventy-one times since September 2006. Meetings are open to the public.

LEADERSHIP

The DVCC Chair and Vice Chair are elected by members via majority vote and serve two-year terms. In January 2019, the DVCC elected Debbie Feinstein, Assistant State's Attorney as Chair; and elected Thomas Manion, Director of the Family Justice Center, as Vice Chair.

DVCC STATUTE CHANGES

In January 2019, the County Executive approved three amendments to the DVCC Statute. The first amendment increases the term for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Coordinating Council from one year to two years. The second amendment added two new seats for representatives from non-governmental or non-profit domestic violence service or advocacy organizations. The third amendment allowed a high school student in any grade to apply to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council Student Member seat.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the thirteenth year since its creation, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) has advanced its mission of reducing the incidence of domestic violence and creating a safe community where families are free of abuse. In 2018-2019, the four committees—Victim Services, Education and Outreach, Legislative and Policy Planning, and Offender Program and Policy—identified focus areas and made progress on executing recommendations from the previous report. This report summarizes the accomplishments of the past year and makes recommendations for the next year.

Special thanks go to the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation for its continued, unwavering support of Domestic Violence Coordinating Council initiatives and the Montgomery County Family Justice Center.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Victim Services Committee is collaborating with the Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center to develop a specialized version of the SafeKeep Program for pets to have a safe place to stay while domestic violence victims secure new housing;
- The Victim Services Committee is collaborating with DVS Legal services on strategies for expanding the network of pro bono attorneys available to represent domestic violence survivors at protective order hearings;
- The Victim Services Committee collaborated with the Safe Start Program by Chesapeake Counseling Associates and with Bar-T to offer free summer camp that incorporated therapeutic elements for children who witness domestic violence;
- The Education and Outreach Committee collaborated with multiple Montgomery County agencies and community organizations for the 10th Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Conference, which was held on April 7, 2019;
- The Education and Outreach Committee coordinated the 10th Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Public Service Announcement (PSA) Video Contest;
- The Education and Outreach Committee presented the Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum, “Expect Respect,” to 7,400 youth in Montgomery County Public Schools as well as various youth groups in the community;
- The Education and Outreach Committee continued the expansion of Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM) with programs at Springbrook High School, Richard Montgomery High School, Montgomery Blair High School, Northwest High School, Colonel Zadok Magruder High School, Parkland Magnet Middle School for Aerospace Technology, Rockville High School and the Charles E Smith Jewish Day School;
- The Education and Outreach Committee distributed Family Justice Center multi-language resource cards around Montgomery County, including all 375 Montgomery

County Ride-On buses to raise awareness of the services offered to domestic violence victims and their families at the FJC;

- The Education and Outreach Committee worked with the Montgomery County Public Information Office to create a bilingual advertisement printed on 72,000 pharmacy paper bags distributed by Kensington Pharmacy in Kensington and Harris Teeter Pharmacy in Clarksburg;
- The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee carefully monitored domestic violence-related legislation that was proposed during the 2019 legislative session in the Maryland General Assembly;
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee met with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, the Montgomery County Police Department, Pre-Trial Services and the State's Attorney's Office to set up policies and procedures to enforce the new law that makes a violation of a pretrial no contact order a crime; and
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee is working on initiatives to expand the Abuser Intervention Program to incarcerated offenders and to juvenile offenders;

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2019 - 2020

- The Victim Services Committee recommends continuing to collaborate with the Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center to develop a specialized version of the SafeKeep Program for pets to have a safe place to stay while domestic violence victims secure new housing.;
- The Victim Services Committee recommends continuing to collaborate with DVS Legal services on strategies for expanding the network of pro bono attorneys available to represent domestic violence survivors at protective order hearings;
- The Victim Services Committee recommends continuing to collaborate with the Safe Start Program by Chesapeake Counseling Associates and with Bar-T to offer free summer camp that incorporated therapeutic elements for children who witness domestic violence;
- The Choose Respect Montgomery initiative has been a successful prevention and outreach project over the past ten years. It is the recommendation of the Education and Outreach Committee to continue and expand collaboration with county agencies, community organizations, and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through the annual conference, the public service announcement video contest, presentations at area schools, and programs for athletes and other youth organizations;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continuing to promote the Family Justice Center and its services through various promotional materials;
- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends the Montgomery County FJC website be revamped to be more user-friendly, include easily accessible information

about the services and programs available at the FJC, include easily accessible contact information and other resources, and follow the best practice of utilizing an "escape" button feature so that potential clients can quickly exit the website if needed for safety reasons;

- The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continuing to raise awareness of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month with public events;
- The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence to monitor and promote legislation that supports the mission of the DVCC;
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends continued collaboration with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, the Montgomery County Police Department, Pre-Trial Services and the State's Attorney's Office to successfully enforce the Violation of Conditions of Pre and Post-Trial Release law;
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human services and other related agencies to promote the Safe Passage Center and to ensure the center's success in expanding the center's use to cases that may have criminal stay away orders but where the court has not ordered supervision/exchange at the center; and
- The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and the Department of Juvenile Services to expand the Abuser Intervention Program;

VICTIM SERVICES COMMITTEE

CHAIR: THOMAS MANION

The Victim Services Committee is focused on assessing current programs, systems, and procedures related to domestic violence victim services, especially those collaborative services available at the Montgomery County Family Justice Center (FJC) that keep victims safe, hold offenders accountable, and break down barriers to long-term sustainability. The Committee has been collaborating actively with Montgomery County FJC agency partners, the Montgomery County FJC Foundation and other stakeholders to identify potential gaps in these efforts and/or areas of improvement. When necessary and appropriate, the Committee will also seek funding to offset the costs of any proposed recommendations. The Committee is also focused on developing and maintaining collaborative partnerships to ensure that survivors in the community receive the best possible services at such a critical time. Primary objectives successfully achieved in the previous year are outlined below, as well as recommendations for the coming year.

FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

The Victim Services Committee identified that many victims of intimate partner violence who come through the FJC are also victims of, or otherwise exposed to, other types of family and sexual violence. These individuals are called polyvictims. Many FJCs across the country are beginning to utilize the same collaborative framework to address polyvictimization, as well as other types of family and sexual violence individually.

RECOMMENDATION: The Victim Services Committee recommends exploring partnerships between the Montgomery County FJC, state and local government entities, and local non-profit organizations in an effort to address the needs of victims of all types of family and sexual violence, particularly polyvictims.

PET SAFETY PROGRAM



One of the many reasons that domestic violence victims are reluctant or unable to leave their abusive partners is because they are concerned about what will happen to their pets if they leave. Often-times, domestic violence shelters or friends and family are unable to house the pet, so the victim stays in the abusive household. The Victim Services Committee is working with the Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption

Center to develop a specialized version of the existing SafeKeep Program specifically for domestic violence victims. This program will allow pets to stay safely at the Animal Services

Center while the victim secures future housing. The new program is expected to be implemented in the coming year.

RECOMMENDATION: The Victim Services Committee recommends continuing to collaborate with the Montgomery County Animal Services & Adoption Center to develop a specialized version of the SafeKeep Program for pets to have a safe place to stay while domestic violence victims secure new housing.

PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES

One of the flagship services of the Montgomery County Family Justice Center is providing pro bono legal representation for clients to represent them at Protective Order hearings and/or family law cases. The Family Justice Center's on-site partners, DVS Legal Services, House of Ruth Maryland, the Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse and other area lawyers who work on a low-bono or pro-bono basis, provide much needed representation for the clients. However, with the increased number of clients served by the Family Justice Center (1,100 in Fiscal Year 2017 to 1,627 in Fiscal Year 2019), the Committee identified the need for more lawyers to represent the growing number of clients. The Committee is working with DVS Legal Services on ways of expanding the network, including recruitment and training strategies and leveraging existing professional relationships.

RECOMMENDATION: The Victim Services Committee recommends continuing to collaborate with DVS Legal services on strategies for expanding the network of pro bono attorneys available to represent domestic violence survivors at protective order hearings.

SAFE START SUMMER CAMP

The Victim Services Committee has been working with Chesapeake Counseling Associates, LLC, which runs the Montgomery County Safe Start Program for children who witness domestic violence, and Bar-T to launch the first Safe Start Summer Camp during the summer of 2019. This camp will provide a free all-day summer camp to 32 children at Bar-T camps in Rockville and Gaithersburg. Victims of domestic violence often struggle with childcare and financial stability, particularly during the summer months. This program allows parents to be worry-free about childcare costs and provides children with a fun-filled summer while still working through the psychological and emotional trauma they experienced as a result of their exposure to domestic violence at home. The counseling sessions will be funded using existing resources already devoted to the Safe Start Program. The Committee looks forward to



releasing more details and celebrating specific successes in the 2020 report, after the inaugural Safe Start Camps have concluded.

RECOMMENDATION: The Victim Services Committee recommends continuing to collaborate with the Safe Start Program by Chesapeake Counseling Associates and with Bar-T to offer free summer camp that incorporated therapeutic elements for children who witness domestic violence.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

CHAIR: DEBBIE FEINSTEIN

The Education and Outreach Committee continued to focus on domestic violence prevention this year. Our teen dating violence prevention initiative, titled Choose Respect Montgomery, includes four primary programs: an annual conference for teens, their parents, educators, and youth service providers; a public service announcement video contest for teens; a healthy teen dating curriculum, “Expect Respect,” which is presented to middle and high schools in the County; and Coaching Boys Into Men, a program that utilizes the unique role of coaches in the lives of young male athletes to teach them to be respectful both on and off the field. This year, the Committee promoted Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October 2018, Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in February 2019, distributed promotional material about the FJC throughout the county and worked with the Circuit Court Family Division Services to provide information about the FJC. Highlights from each of these activities, as well as recommendations for the future, are listed below.

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: **HEALTHY TEEN DATING CONFERENCE**

The 10th Annual Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Conference was held on Sunday, April 7, 2019 at Richard Montgomery High School. Funded by Verizon Wireless through its partnership with the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation and



sponsored by the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC), Montgomery County Public Schools, and numerous other Montgomery County agencies and organizations, this annual conference promotes respect in dating relationships and raises community awareness about the prevalence of teen dating violence. The conference, which was promoted using the hashtag #RespectYourSelfie2019, focused on learning about different types of abuse, how to identify the red flags of dating abuse, who to talk to and how to help a friend.

This year, nearly 500 students, parents, public officials, educators, youth service providers, and volunteers attended the conference. Attendees came from more than 60 different schools and all areas of the county. When attendees first arrived, they walked the Red Carpet and took selfies with their friends and public officials. Students were encouraged to post their selfies on social media using #RespectYourSelfie2019. Through the Committee’s continued partnership with Zoomph, a live social media feed with rotating tiles played on a large screen in the main auditorium, showcasing all posts and pictures that used the conference hashtag. Before the opening session, participants walked through the resource

fair to learn about more than 30 community-based organizations offering services to youth in the County.

The conference emceed by Toby Knapp (97.1 FM) also included a powerful survivor story by Tenaj Moody, a young woman who was in an abusive relationship in high school. The committee also recognized the two schools with the most entries in the Public Service Announcement contest, Roberto Clemente Middle School and Redland Middle School. Through generous community donations, each school received \$500 and \$250 respectively for their school programs. Students then participated in small group workshops developed by the Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA), TurnAround, Inc. and Men Can Stop Rape. Youth service providers and educators participated in similar workshops, while parents participated in a workshop led by Cheryl Kravitz, a member of the DVCC and a domestic violence survivor, on how to communicate with teens about dating violence. Small group workshops were also offered in Spanish for students and parents. Following the workshops, Toby Knapp announced the winners of the Public Service Announcement Video Contest and gave out raffle prizes.

The conference evaluations were very positive and constructive and will be taken into consideration when planning future events.

The DVCC is very appreciative of the event sponsorship from Verizon Wireless through its partnership with the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation. Special thanks also go to Montgomery County Public Schools, JCADA, iHeart Radio, Zoomph and the numerous other county and community partners that made the 10th Annual Choose Respect Conference a huge success. Plans for the annual event scheduled for Spring 2020 are already underway.

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT VIDEO CONTEST



**1ST PLACE: “REFLECTION”
(WOOTTON HIGH SCHOOL)**

For the tenth consecutive year, the DVCC coordinated a Public Service Announcement Video Contest for local teens in middle and high school. This contest raises teens’ awareness on the issue of teen dating violence, both through the creation of the PSAs, as well as the distribution of the finished PSAs on social media, YouTube, and in schools. Participants were challenged to create a 60-second video promoting attention to at least two forms of dating abuse to show that abuse often takes more than one form. Students were also asked to

include the phone number for the Family Justice Center. Participants submitted 79 entries

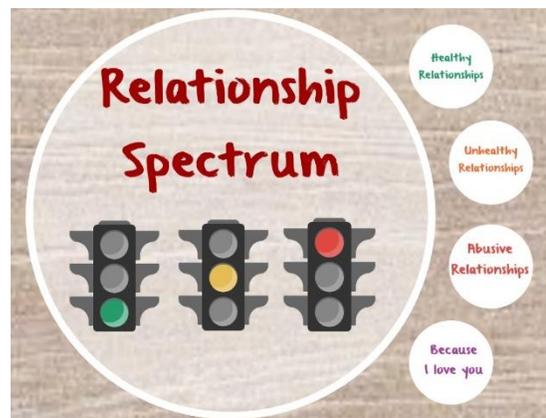
(by 275 students) from 20 different schools and 2 organizations. This year’s winner was “Reflection” by two students from Wootton High School. Along with the winners chosen by a panel of judges (\$1000 for first prize, \$750 for second, \$500 for third, and gift cards for two honorable mentions), a record 17,000 students from around the county viewed and voted on a “fan favorite” video, which won \$500. The “fan favorite” award was sponsored by the Montgomery County Police Department Foundation and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Theta Omega Chapter, and was awarded to “You Are Not Alone,” submitted by a group of students from Winston Churchill High School. This year’s contest was sponsored by Verizon Wireless through its partnership with the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation.

The DVCC and its partners believe that this contest provides a worthwhile opportunity for teens and will launch the 2020 contest in the Fall of 2019. Entries will be accepted in English and Spanish, and cash prizes will be awarded to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners at the 2020 Choose Respect event.

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: **EXPECT RESPECT—HEALTHY TEEN DATING CURRICULUM**

Expect Respect, a 45-minute interactive program that teaches young people about dating violence, provides opportunities for student involvement and features brief videos on various dating abuse topics such as verbal abuse, abuse through technology, consent, and how to intervene as a responsible witness. The conversations with teens during the program specifically focus on:

- 1) Components of healthy dating behaviors such as trust, respect and non-threatening communication;
- 2) Identification of early warning signs of abusive dating behavior including control, isolation, criticism and manipulation;
- 3) Identification of the roles in abusive dating relationships; and
- 4) Addressing dating violence when it is witnessed in school or social circles.



Local resources and national teen dating abuse help lines and websites are also discussed. The youth receive a handout with the warning signs of dating violence and a list of resources in the county.

The Choose Respect Montgomery Healthy Teen Dating Curriculum is offered at no cost and is available in English and Spanish. Presentation requests are received at the Sheriff’s Office from various school personnel, including health teachers, counselors and school

principals; and from community organizations, including youth groups and religious organizations. Representatives of the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, Chesapeake Counseling Associates and the Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse facilitate the Expect Respect presentations.

In this tenth year since the implementation of these presentations, facilitators gave 231 Expect Respect presentations to 7,400 young people at 28 schools and for 6 community groups.

In addition, the DVCC created an expanded 90-minute Expect Respect workshop that includes additional information on sexual assault prevention. A member of the State's Attorney's Office presented this workshop once a month to male youthful offenders aged 18-21 at the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. This coming year, facilitators from the State's Attorney's Office will present Expect Respect to youth at the Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center (the county's juvenile detention center).

CHOOSE RESPECT MONTGOMERY: **COACHING BOYS INTO MEN**



Historically, intimate partner violence prevention has been viewed solely as a women's issue. The DVCC recognizes, however, that engaging male-identified youth in violence prevention is equally important. Many promising programs involving young men are being introduced across the United States, including one created by Futures Without Violence entitled Coaching Boys Into Men (CBIM). CBIM is a free toolkit that utilizes the unique and

important role that coaches play in the lives of young men. These comprehensive tools assist coaches in planning important discussions with athletes about respect for women and girls, and that violence does not equal strength. Through CBIM, male athletes learn skills to avoid violence and abuse in their relationships.

Springbrook High School piloted the first CBIM program in Montgomery County with their varsity football team during the 2013-2014 academic year. The program has now been implemented in eight schools—Springbrook High School, Richard Montgomery High School, Montgomery Blair High School, Northwest High School, Colonel Zadok Magruder High School, Parkland Magnet Middle School for Aerospace Technology, Rockville High School and the Charles E Smith Jewish Day School.

The Education and Outreach Committee has also started promoting Athletes as Leaders, a similar program for female-identified athletes. This program aims to empower female-identified youth to take an active role in promoting healthy relationships and ending sexual

violence. Athletes are encouraged to be leaders in creating a culture of safety and respect at their school. Athletes as Leaders will be piloted at area schools during the 2019-2020 school year.

RECOMMENDATION: The Choose Respect Montgomery initiative has been a successful prevention and outreach project over the past ten years. It is the recommendation of the Education and Outreach Committee to continue and expand collaboration with county agencies, community organizations, and schools to increase awareness and prevention of teen dating violence through the annual conference, the public service announcement video contest, presentations at area schools, and programs for athletes and other youth organizations.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Victims of domestic violence often do not know what services are available to them, or where to go to seek help. To promote awareness of these resources, the Education and Outreach Committee develops different materials to distribute around the community.

During Fiscal Year 2018, the committee developed Family Justice Center (FJC) Multi-Language information cards. The language card states, “Are you afraid of your partner? Free help is available,” in the 16 most commonly spoken languages in Montgomery County—English, Spanish, French, Mandarin, Amharic, Korean, Swahili, Igbo, Arabic, Tagalog, Russian, Urdu, Hindi, Vietnamese, Farsi and Portuguese. The Committee wanted to ensure that the cards were accessible both to low literacy populations and to people who speak different languages.



This year, these cards are available at the Montgomery County Regional Services Centers, Montgomery County Recreation Centers, Montgomery County public libraries, in the courtrooms where protective orders are heard in the Rockville and Silver Spring District Court locations, and in all of the women’s restrooms in the Judicial Center/Circuit Court building. Montgomery County Police also have them available in patrol cars. DVCC members have also distributed the cards to the public. In addition, the cards are now available on all 375 Montgomery County Ride-On buses. The DVCC also mailed the cards to doctor’s offices, daycares, hair and nail salons and yoga studios for distribution. This coming year, the cards will be available at all Montgomery County Public Schools. The committee is also working on an outreach initiative for faith-based organizations to let them know about the services at the FJC.



The Education and Outreach Committee also worked with the Montgomery County Public Information Office to create a bilingual advertisement printed on pharmacy paper bags distributed by Kensington

Pharmacy in Kensington and Harris Teeter Pharmacy in Clarksburg. This year, 72,000 bags were printed and distributed with FJC contact information.

The committee additionally worked with the Family Division Services in the Montgomery County Circuit Court to include information on domestic violence and the Family Justice Center during the mandatory classes given to parents in contested custody cases. The committee created informational slides that are now included in these presentations.

RECOMMENDATION: The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continued promotion of the Family Justice Center and its services through various promotional materials.

ONLINE OUTREACH EFFORTS: FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER WEBSITE

The internet is often the first place people go to get information and to learn about local resources, which means a service provider's website can often make a difference in whether a victim decides to reach out for assistance or not. It is imperative that information on the FJC website be logically organized and easily accessible in a user-friendly and visually appealing site that evokes the warm, client-focused, supportive environment of the FJC itself. Additionally, it is considered a nationwide best practice to include an emergency "escape" option for victims to be able to exit the site or redirect to an alternate site immediately for safety reasons.

RECOMMENDATION: The Education and Outreach Committee recommends the Montgomery County FJC website be revamped to be more user-friendly, include easily accessible information about the services and programs available at the FJC, include easily accessible contact information and other resources, and follow the best practice of utilizing an "escape" button feature so that potential clients can quickly exit the website if needed for safety reasons.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROCLAMATIONS

During October 2018, the Montgomery County Council proclaimed October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month with support from the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.

In February 2019, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council worked with the Montgomery County Council and the Montgomery County Board of Education to present a proclamation designating February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

RECOMMENDATION: The Education and Outreach Committee recommends continuing to raise awareness of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month with public events.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY PLANNING COMMITTEE

CHAIR: ACTING CHIEF MARCUS JONES

The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee focused this year on supporting certain domestic violence-related legislation in the state of Maryland. Below is a summary of supported legislation as well as the committee's recommendation for the coming year.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION UPDATES

Several bills related to domestic violence were proposed to the Maryland General Assembly this year. The bills supported by the Legislative and Policy Committee are summarized below.

The following bills were passed and signed into law:

House Bill 121 / Senate Bill 130: Criminal Procedure - Charge by Citation - Violation of Condition of Release

This legislation removes a violation of a condition of pre or post-trial release from the list of crimes for which a police officer must issue a citation, a change necessary to give effect to the 2018 law that makes it a crime to violate the no contact condition of pre or post-trial release. This bill fixes a small technical oversight from an important bill passed last year.

House Bill 218 / Senate Bill 147: Public Health - Disposition of Remains - Forfeiture or Waiver of Right of Disposition

This legislation prevents a surviving estranged spouse from having rights to dispose of the body of the deceased spouse if: a petition for divorce is pending, or the survivor is charged with first- or second-degree murder or voluntary manslaughter in connection with the death.

House Bill 667 / Senate Bill 138: Stalking – Violation of Conditions of Release

Last year, the Legislature passed a bill making it a crime to violate a condition of release, including “stay away” no contact provisions in crimes of violence, in domestically related crimes, and for sex crimes against minors, thereby allowing police to arrest a defendant who has violated a pretrial release no contact order. This legislation adds stalking to the list of violative acts.

House Bill 757 / Senate Bill 561: Criminal Law – Crime of Violence Against Pregnant Person – Enhanced Penalty (Laura and Reid’s Law)

This legislation provides for an enhanced penalty when a person commits a crime of violence against another person when the person knows or believes that the other person is pregnant. The enhanced penalty is imprisonment not exceeding 10 years in addition to any other sentence the court imposes for the underlying crime of violence.

The following proposed bills were not passed, however may be reintroduced in the coming year:

House Bill 253: Protective Orders – Relief – Transfer of Wireless Telephone Service

This legislation would have permitted a court to order cell phone providers to transfer billing responsibility and phone numbers from an abuser to a survivor of domestic violence, if the survivor has a protective order against the abuser/contract holder.

House Bill 122 / Senate Bill 209: Protective Orders – Relief Eligibility – Rape and Sexual Offenses

This bill would change the definition of “person eligible for relief” in a protective order to include anyone who alleges s/he is a victim of a rape or sexual offense, clarifying that they are eligible to receive a protective order rather than a peace order.

House Bill 95: Public Safety - Firearms Disqualifications - Antique Firearm (Shadé’s Law)

This legislation would have added “antique firearm” to the term “firearm” for general provisions of law relating to firearms.

House Bill 363 / Senate Bill 341: Evidence – Testimony by Spouse – Violation of Protective Order

This legislation would have eliminated the ability of a witness-spouse to invoke marital privilege to refuse to testify against his or her defendant-spouse at a Violation of Protective Order prosecution.

House Bill 850: Peace Orders and Protective Orders – Coercive Control

This legislation would have added “coercive control” to the definition of abuse in both the Peace and Protective order statutes.

RECOMMENDATION: The Legislative and Policy Planning Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence to monitor and promote legislation that supports the mission of the DVCC.

OFFENDER PROGRAM AND POLICY COMMITTEE

CHAIR: TINA MICHAELS

The Offender Program and Policy Committee includes members from Montgomery County and Maryland State agencies that focus on domestic violence offender intervention. Committee members focus on evaluating offender programs within their individual departments and identifying collaborative opportunities to improve communication and offender services as a whole. The details of the committee's departmental and system review as well as recommendations for improvement are outlined below.

IMPLEMENTATION OF HB 388/SB 170 - CRIMINAL PROCEDURE - VIOLATION OF CONDITIONS OF RELEASE

HB 388/SB 170 – Criminal Procedure – Violation of Conditions of Release was a new law that went into effect on October 1, 2018. This bill makes the violation of a pretrial no contact order a crime. If a person is arrested and released to pre-trial supervision, very often the court often sets special conditions of release for the defendant. A common special condition is to have no contact with the victim. Prior to the enactment of this new law, if the defendant violated a pretrial special condition, the violation was not a separate crime. Instead, either Pre-trial Supervision or the State's Attorney's Office would file a notice of violation to the Court and ask for a revocation of bond where appropriate. By making violation of release conditions a separate crime, it enables law enforcement to arrest a defendant for violating his/her conditions of release, including to stay away from the victim. Since October 1, 2018, six individuals have been criminally charged with violating conditions of release.

Earlier this year, the Offender Program and Policy Committee held meetings with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, the Montgomery County Police Department, Pre-Trial Services and the State's Attorney's Office to set up policies and procedures to enforce the new law. The agencies are working together to make sure that if someone is in violation of a pretrial no contact order, they are taken into custody without incident. In addition, the committee is taking measures to notify victims about the new law and what to do if the defendant violates their conditions.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends continued collaboration with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, the Montgomery County Police Department, Pre-Trial Services and the State's Attorney's Office to enforce the Violation of Conditions of Pre and Post-Trial Release law successfully.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY SUPERVISED EXCHANGE AND VISITATION CENTER

The Safe Passage Center for Supervised Visitation and Monitored Exchange (SPC) opened in January 2018 under the leadership of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services via contract with Family Services, Inc. With a court order, residents can use the SPC for visitation and exchange. Supervised visitation allows parents in high conflict or high-risk situations to maintain their bond with their children and have access to their children in a safe and supervised



environment. There is no contact with the other parent which allows for a less stressful visit for the parent and child(ren). Through monitored exchange, SPC staff supervise the transfer of a child from the residential to the visiting parent at the start of the parent/child contact, and back to the residential parent at the end of the contact. The supervision is usually limited to the exchanges, and the remainder of the parent/child visit is unsupervised. During Fiscal Year 2019, the SPC facilitated 2,633 visitations and exchanges.

RECOMMENDATION: The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services and other related agencies to promote the Safe Passage Center and to ensure the center's success in expanding the use of the center to cases that may have criminal stay away orders but where supervision/exchange at the center has not been ordered by court.

ABUSER INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The Offender Program and Policy Committee is currently working on initiatives to expand the Abuser Intervention Program (AIP). The AIP program is a 22-week group therapy program for individuals who are abusive to their intimate partners and who have been court-ordered to participate. The majority of individuals who completed the program report being "very satisfied" with the group experience and have made changes in their lives related to the use of physical abuse and controlling behavior. They learned to take responsibility for their actions and to communicate more effectively.

Currently, this program is available to protective order respondents, and defendants who are supervised by Pre-trial services or on probation. The Offender Program and Policy Committee is exploring the possibility of offering the program to those that are currently

incarcerated in the county's jails on domestic violence charges. These are offenders who would greatly benefit from this program.

The Committee is also exploring adapting the program for juvenile offenders. Currently, the Expect Respect workshop is being presented to the youthful offenders in the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and will be implemented at the Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center (the county's juvenile detention center) this coming year. The committee would also like to offer the AIP program to juvenile offenders of intimate partner violence to reduce recidivism.

RECOMMENDATION: The Offender Program and Policy Committee recommends ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Human services, the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation and the Department of Juvenile Services to expand the Abuser Intervention Program.

SUMMARY

Through the services provided by the FJC, the monitoring of domestic violence policy, and the implementation of numerous domestic violence prevention initiatives, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) continues to play an active and critical role in creating a safe community for families to live free of abuse. These activities and programs would not be possible without the support of DVCC agency partners, community groups and the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation. In the coming year, the DVCC will continue to promote and expand existing initiatives and services as well as explore new, innovative strategies to reduce the incidence of domestic violence in Montgomery County.



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